

Voucher expansionists typically project lower cost estimates for voucher expansion than the actual cost.

Voucher expansionists are either faulty estimators, or guilty of subterfuge. This is the narrative in nearly every state in which vouchers are initiated or expanded.

Examples are numerous. Voucher legislation in New Hampshire was estimated to cost \$3.3 million. Turns out, the actual cost was \$22.7 million. In Arizona, some Arizona officials opine that the voucher program not only exceeded projections of voucher expansionists, but could bankrupt the state. Public officials in Ohio ignored the cost estimates of the non-partisan Legislative Services Commission (LSC) and announced a lower cost figure. The cost of implementing the universal voucher scheme in Ohio will exceed the estimates exponentially.

Voucher advocates and their lapdogs in state government have never been forthright in any aspect of the voucher campaign. Starting with the small-scale Cleveland Voucher Project, voucher zealots and their state government boon companions have snookered the public.

Ohio has committed \$239.8 million—and counting—for private school tuition vouchers.

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COLUMBUS, Ohio – The state is on the hook for \$239.8 million for private school tuition vouchers it expanded this academic year. It's a figure that could more than double in coming weeks.

In the budget passed in late June, the General Assembly expanded both the value of the EdChoice Expansion Scholarship and income eligibility of families who apply for it. Now all families can get state funds to help with tuition costs, although upper-income families don't get the full value of the voucher. The full voucher increased from \$5,500 to \$6,165 this school year for students in K-8 and from \$7,500 to \$8,407 in 9-12.

The number of families applying for vouchers has increased, too.

As of Oct. 14, state education officials approved 41,120 students for the EdChoice Expansion vouchers, which commits the state to \$239.8 million for their scholarships, said Lacey Snoke, a spokeswoman for the state Department of Education and Workforce, or DEW, Ohio's new K-12 education agency.

However, DEW officials are still working through another 46,000 applications. If most are approved, the state may go well over the \$397.8 million the General Assembly budgeted for the vouchers this academic year.

Last year, the department approved 24,320 applications for the same voucher program.

Oct. 15 is the deadline for students to be enrolled in private schools if their parents are to receive tuition assistance from the state. But their parents have until June 30, 2024, to apply for the scholarship, Snoke said.

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Since eligibility was expanded, many families who never before received assistance with tuition are likely among the applicants. Other applicants could be new families to private school.

The state expanded eligibility to 450% of the federal poverty level, or \$135,000 for a family of four, from the previous 250% of the federal poverty level, or \$75,000 for a family of four.

The value of the voucher begins to decrease for families earning above 450%. For instance, families at 451% to 500% of the poverty level are eligible for \$5,200 for K-8 and \$7,050 for 9-12.

The value ratchets down as incomes get higher, and cuts off at families earning above 750%, or \$225,000 or more for a family of four. They get \$650 in state aid for K-8 and \$950 for 9-12.

While advocates of school choice argue that this program gives parents the freedom to direct their children's education, advocates of public schools say that these funds are going to starve public schools. Public schools have more rigorous testing standards than private schools. And they're published online, allowing for critics to dismiss public schools as "failing" when a similar comparison cannot be made to the local private schools that are drawing students away.

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<https://www.cleveland.com/news/2023/10/ohio-has-committed-2398-million-and-counting-for-private-school-tuition-vouchers.html>